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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE -- BUREAU OF MINES

THE HOLMES SAFETY ASSOCIATION, ITS OBJECTIVES, AND ITS WORK IN THE UNIONTOWN-BROWNSVILLE REGION OF PENNSYLVANIA

BY

G. W. GROVE

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THE HOLMES SAFETY ASSOCIATION, ITS OBJECTIVES, AND ITS WORK IN THE UNIONTOWN-BROWNSVILLE REGION OF PENNSYLVANIA [1]

By G. W. Grove[2]

Introduction

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association and the Holmes Association have fostered many chapters that have served as a medium in increasing safety in the mining industry. Details relating to the formation, operation, and achievements of the J. J. Forbes District Council of the Holmes Safety Association, which operates in the Uniontown-Brownsville bituminous coal district of western Pennsylvania, will be of interest to all who are striving to increase safety in mines, quarries, and in the oil fields.

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association was organized in 1916 by 24 of the leading technical societies and mining organizations to perpetuate the memory of Dr. Joseph Austin Holmes, first Director of the United States Bureau of Mines.

The activities of the association were divided into three sections, as follows:

1. The awarding of gold, silver, and bronze hero medals and diplomas to individual persons in the mining industry who have risked their lives in an effort to save the life of a fellow worker.

2. The awarding of honoriums to operating companies who have developed and installed the most efficient safety devices, appliances, or methods.

3. The organization of Holmes Safety Chapters for the advancement of safety in the mining, metallurgical, petroleum, quarrying, and allied industries.

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association continues to award honoriums to companies for outstanding achievements in safety and to present hero medals to individual men for life-saving efforts, but the direction and control of Safety Chapters have been delegated to the Holmes Safety Association, which was formed for this purpose.

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2 Mining engineer, U. S. Bureau of Mines.

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The Holmes Safety Association

In 1922 the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association began organizing local Holmes Safety Chapters and during the next few years over 100 such chapters, also one district council with 29 affiliated chapters, were formed at mines, metallurgical plants, and quarries.

At the 1926 meeting of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, the constitution of the association was revised to establish the Holmes Safety Association, which assumed the direction and control of all existing chapters and others which might be established, together with all other branches or divisions of the Holmes Safety Association which might be organized.

The Holmes Safety Association is a self-governing body, but in order to maintain contact with the parent organization, six representatives, selected annually, serve as a portion of the membership of the Board of Directors of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association. From this it will be seen that the Holmes Safety Association, which controls the activities of the chapters and councils, has a voice in conducting the affairs of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, but that the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association has no authority over, or voice in, the affairs of the Holmes Safety Association. The Director of the United States Bureau of Mines is president of both organizations.

The Holmes Safety Association is a national organization, the objects of which are to arrange and hold meetings and provide for organized cooperative effort looking toward:

(a) The prevention of accidents and the improvement of the health conditions of all persons connected with mining, metallurgical, petroleum, quarrying, and allied industries at work, in the home, and in public places, and to promote the general welfare of its members.

(b) The dissemination of information and instructions on all subjects related to the promotion of health and safety. The prevention of plant or mine fires, mine explosions, and other disasters.

(c) The promotion of training in first-aid, oxygen breathing apparatus, and other forms of protection, mine-rescue, and recovery operations.

(d) The closest possible relations with existing organizations having for their purpose the promotion of health, safety, and efficiency, including local, State, and Federal agencies.

(e) The promotion of educational, social, and recreational activities, including cooperation with local, State, and Federal authorities and other institutions in the training of plant employees and the advancement of education.

The Holmes Safety Association is not intended to replace existing mine or plant safety organizations having for their purpose the promotion of health, safety, and efficiency, but to supplement the work of such organizations as a cooperating agency to coordinate the general safety, educational, health, and welfare service as set forth in its constitution.

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National Council

The activities of the Holmes Safety Association are conducted by the National Council, which operates through State of district councils to local chapters.

The National Council consists of representatives of State or district councils or other authorized representatives of the association, the Director of the United States Bureau of Mines, and other employees of the Bureau of Mines designated by the Director.

State Councils

A State council consists of representatives of each district council and representatives of organizations including State departments interested in general safety, the prevention of accidents, and the promotion of health in mining, metallurgical, petroleum, and quarrying industries.

District Councils

A district council consists of one representative from each local chapter in the district, representatives of operating companies, State and county inspectors, safety engineers, insurance inspectors, or representatives of insurance companies, county or State health authorities, or other representatives of organizations interested in the promotion of safety and health in the mining metallurgical, petroleum, quarrying, and allied industries.

Local Chapters

Each local chapter has membership composed of persons (male or female) of 16 years of age or over interested in supporting the objects of the Holmes Safety Association.

Meetings are usually held monthly; generally there are addresses and discussions of subjects relating to health and safety, together with some form of entertainment, or serving of refreshments, etc. The officers of a local chapter consist of a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, safety director, health director, an educational director, a social director, and an executive committee; other committees are appointed as may be required.

The small amount of money required to conduct the affairs of the Holmes Safety Association is contributed to the National Council by the local chapters, which pay $5 per year as dues. Of this amount, 10 per cent is returned to the State council and 40 per cent to the district council having jurisdiction over the local council.

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The J. J. Forbes District Council

The J. J. Forbes District Council of the Holmes Safety Association is an example of a well organized and operated district council of this kind.

After several preliminary meetings of officials of coal companies, State mine inspectors, and others interested in the promotion of safety, a council of the Holmes Safety Association was organized on October 26, 1925, at Orient, Fayette County, Pa., with the usual officers, including president, vice-president secretary-treasurer, and executive committee.

The council was named in honor of Mr. J. J. Forbes of the United States Bureau of Mines, mainly through whose efforts the Council was organized.

The chief object in organizing the council was to provide a medium throug which the work of local chapters which might be established in the Uniontown-Brownsville district could be coordinated, and also to provide a source from which speakers could be obtained for chapter meetings, etc.

Following the organization of the council, local safety chapters were organized at nine mines. The name, number, location, and date of organization of these chapters are as follows:

Briar Hill Chapter No. 139, Briar Hill, Pa., Noevember 17, 1925.
Affelder Chapter No. 140, Masontown, Pa., November 19, 1925.
Orient Chapter No. 142, Orient, Pa., November 18, 1925.
J. J. Geary Chapter No. 143, Alicia, Pa., November 24, 1925.
Frank B. Dunbar Chapter No. 149, Republic, Pa., March 24, 1926.
Thomas Watson Chapter No. 150, Republic,Pa., March 25, 1926.
J. H. Hillman Chapter No. 152, Hillcoke, Pa., April 1, 1926.
T. W. Guthrie Chapter No. 153, Republic, Pa., April 7, 1926.
R. W. Flenniken Chapter No. 158, Gans, Pa., April 27, 1926.

These local chapters were all located at separate mines; seven of them were at mines operated by the Hillman Coal and Coke Co., one at a mine of the Buckeye Coal Co., and one at a mine of the Monesson Coal and Coke Co. In additio to the chapters under the J. J. Forbes District Council, there are three other chapters established at mines operated by the Hillman Coal and Coke Co., but whic do not come under the jurisdiction of this council. All of the local chapters with the exception of Chapter No. 139 located at Briar Hill, Pa. and Chapter No. 143, located at Alicia, Pa., have held meetings regularly since their organizatio

A particular feature of these local chapters, which is of considerable value, is that membership is extended to the women and children of the miner's family; this feature is provided by few if any other safety-welfare organization for mines. It is believed that because safety matters are brought to the attention of the miner's family, added impetus is given to the promotion of safety.

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Operations of the Council

The successful operation of the J. J. Forbes District Council of the Holmes Safety Association has been due to the untiring efforts of several prominent coal-operating officials, State mine inspectors, and others who have contributed their services as workers, speakers, and entertainers.

The most important agencies which have contributed to the success of the council are the program committees appointed annually by the various presidents. These committees have been instrumental in obtaining speakers for the various monthly chapter meetings; although a great deal of effort was required to accomplish this, the committees have almost invariably had one or more speakers, with a message on safety or health, present at every meeting held by each local chapter. In addition to directing and assisting the affairs of the local chapters under its jurisdiction, the council has held an annual meeting every year since its organization, several meetings of the executive committee, meetings of the program committee, and two annual banquets.

The first annual banquet was held on December 15, 1927, at Uniontown, Pa., and the second on December 6, 1928, at Uniontown, Pa. Each of these banquets was attended by over 300 men connected with the council or chapters, by State mine inspectors, mine officials, representatives of the Bureau of Mines, and others interested in promoting safety in the mining industry. The number attending has been limited by the available room in the banquet hall, and many others would have attended if the seating capacity had been larger.

These annual banquets are the means of bringing the activities of the council before a large number of people who are not connected or familiar with the operation of the council, as well as being effective in arousing enthusiasm among the officers and members of the council and affiliated chapters.

On November 5, 1928, the annual meeting of the J. J. Forbes District Council was held at Orient, Pa., and in addition to the election of officers much business of interest to safety was transacted.

During the meeting the various chapter secretaries reported that 58 meetings were held during the year by the seven active chapters, with a total attendance of 10,895 persons. Owing to the fact that some of the mines at which chapters are established did not work continuously, a number of meetings were not held. This of course materially reduced the total chapter meetings and the total attendance of the meetings. During the year 65 speakers, some of whom spoke at several meetings, made a total of 153 safety addresses at the 58 chapter meetings.

A record of the total attendance and average number at each meeting held by the chapters which operate under the council is as follows:

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Record of attendance at meetings of chapters of J. J. Forbes District Council

Chapters	Total attendance			Average attendance		
	1926	1927	1928	1926	1927	1928
Affelder Chapter No. 140	1,256	2,368	0	105	197	0
Orient Chapter No. 142	4,054	4,603	3,118	338	383	260
F. B. Dunbar Chapter No. 149	1,849	1,725	1,300	185	172	162
Thos. Watson Chapter No. 150	1,412	2,015	1,230	141	168	137
J.H. Hillman Chapter No. 152	3,650	5,500	3,400	405	500	377
T.W. Guthrie Chapter No. 153	1,582	1,394	1,644	176	158	164
R.W.Flenniken Chapter No. 158	690	794	203	76	99	101
Briar Hill Chapter No. 139	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.J. Geary Chapter No. 143	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	14,493	18,899	10,895	204	240	172

The three year's operation of the active chapters of the council has resulted in better industrial relations between employer and employee at the mines where the chapters have been established. A marked decrease in the number and severity of accidents has also resulted, as the following table will show:

Decrease in accidents during operation of chapters of J. J. Forbes District Council

Chapter	Number of accidents			Number of days lost		
	1926	1927	1928	1926	1927	1928
Affelder Chapter No. 140	92	38	5	1,321	538	129
Orient Chapter No. 142	309	128	85	3,109	2,049	2,372
F. B. Dunbar Chapter No. 149	77	84	48	1,166	2,087	1,772
Thos. Watson Chapter No. 150	133	158	17	2,684	3,117	322
J. H. Hillman Chapter No. 152	87	164	94	2,040	3,477	2,509
T. W. Guthrie Chapter No. 153	86	60	38	1,339	1,256	1,360
R.W. Flenniken Chapter No. 158	10	8	0	141	83	0
Totals	794	640	287	11,800	12,607	8,464

The foregoing table shows that the mines at which chapters operate had 154 fewer accidents during 1927 than in 1926, 353 fewer during 1928 than in 1927, and 507 fewer during 1928 than in 1926. Also, while 1927 shows a slight increase over 1926 in the number of days lost as a result of accidents, 1928 shows a marked decrease in time lost over both 1926 and 1927. These figures strongly indicate that the efforts put forth by the local chapters and the council are of definite aid in getting worthwhile results in accident prevention.

During the 1928 annual meeting action was taken toward enlarging the activities of the council by making an effort to revive the two inactive chapters and to organize additional chapters. The council definitely decided to sponsor a county first-aid contest during 1929 in order to stimulate interest in first-aid work at mines in Fayette County. The council also unanimously voted as being in favor of 100 per cent first-aid training, by which every man who works in or around the mines would receive such training.

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Conclusions

1. Local chapters of the Holmes Safety Association are an excellent medium through which to conduct safety work in mines and to foster community safety and welfare in mining towns and villages.

2. Local chapters in order to function properly should be part of a district council; the efficiency of local chapters is greatly increased when their work is supervised.

3. District Councils should consist of chapter representatives and all persons within a specified district who are interested in the advancement of safety.

4. Where Holmes chapters are organized, the industrial relations between employer and employee are improved, and means for conducting efficient safety work are provided which will undoubtedly result in reduction of accidents.

5. The Holmes chapters in the Uniontown-Brownsville region of Pennsylvania are doing much good work toward forwarding the health and safety of the miners and of their families.

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